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Reagan Lauds Agency at Oath-Taking

Webster Vows 'Fidelity' as CIA Director

✓ By JAMES GERSTENZANG, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—William H. Webster was sworn in Tuesday as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and promised that its duties would be carried out "with fidelity to the Constitution and the laws of our beloved country."

The former FBI director, taking the reins of the nation's intelligence community while it is under intense scrutiny because of the Iran-*contra* scandal, pledged to work closely with the congressional committees that oversee intelligence operations and vowed: "We will be worthy of their trust."

President Reagan attended the oath-taking ceremony at the CIA's campus-like headquarters in Langley, Va., and affirmed his

support of the agency's efforts.

"It has become fashionable in some quarters to act as if the Central Intelligence Agency were somehow not completely a part of our own government—as if it were not constantly working against hostile powers who threaten the security of the American people," Reagan said. "So long as I am President, I will never consent to see our intelligence capability undermined."

Reagan's visit to the CIA headquarters was intended to show his support for Webster, the 14th director, and to boost the morale of employees.

Congressional investigators have charged that William J. Casey,

Webster's deceased predecessor, deliberately misled congressional committees about aspects of the Administration's arms sales to Iran. They also have cited mounting evidence that some CIA officials assisted in the secret efforts to aid the Nicaraguan rebels at a time when U.S. government assistance was banned.

As Webster takes over, the agency is under pressure from the House and Senate to pay closer heed to the requirement that it give the Congress "timely notice" of all covert operations.

Congress is considering a number of proposals that would define "timely notice" specifically. Some would require immediate notification of undercover efforts; another would allow 48 hours to make such a report. Members of the Iran-*contra* investigating committees, who have been authorized to recommend such changes, are opposed to more specific language.

Webster, in brief remarks that made no direct mention of the Iran-*contra* affair, told the President and his audience of senior Administration officials and agency employees: "We will diligently carry out our assignments around the world, however difficult, with fidelity to the Constitution and the laws of our beloved country, so help us God."

He also gave a rhetorical pat on the back to the CIA undercover agents who were said to have stayed away from the ceremony to protect their identities.

"There are some today who can hear my voice but who cannot share the sunlight of this occasion because our country needs their anonymity," he said. "I simply want to salute these unseen soldiers of democracy and say that I am proud to join their team."

At least six former CIA directors, including Vice President George Bush, turned out to see Webster sworn in by Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr.